

JOKED WITH A BEAR.

ZEB WHITE HAD A HEAP OF FUN WITH THE VARMINT.

The Possum Hunter's Story of the Tricks He Played on Poor Bruin and the Way the Unforgiving Beast Beat Him Out of the Hide.

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"One September day," said the old possum hunter of Tennessee as I asked him for a story, "I was sittin on these yere steps smokin my pipe when a b'ar suddenly appeared out thar by the corner of the pignen. I didn't git frustrated. I seen the b'ar was pore in flesh, and I knowed his fur wasn't prime. It ain't no use to kill a b'ar jest fur the sake of killin. Besides, thar was some thin sort of cute lookin in his face. As we looked at each other he cocked his ears and seemed to say:

"Hello, Zeb White! I've called around to see yo'. I won't be wuth fillin fur two months yit, and meanwhile, if yo' don't mind, we'll hev some fun."

"I took it that he said that, and the old woman took it that way, too, and so I didn't skeer him off. He sauntered around fur a spell and then disappeared, but I knowed what he was up to. I had two hives of bees, and he



"WE LOOKED AT EACH OTHER."

had marked 'em down and would be back some night arter honey. It wasn't an hour befo' I moved them hives out of his reach and replaced 'em with two hives filled with straw. I shet the old dog up in the house that night, and 'bout midnight he begun to whine and growl. I jest got to the window when the b'ar showed up. He was arter that honey, and he hadn't no time to waste. One hive wasn't 'nuff fur him, and he knocked both over as soon as he got within reach and then made ready fur a feast. When he found them hives hard packed with straw, he knowed it was a joke, and he set up and looked so sheepish and mean over it that I laughed fur half an hour. That b'ar went away feelin hurt in his feelin's, but I was suah he'd come back ag'in some other night and try to pay me off.

"I had jest penned up a likely pig, and that b'ar was bound to hev pig meat if he couldn't hev honey. He was suah to be back the next night, and so I spent two hours greasin the roof of the pen with soft soap. When I was through, it was so slippery that even claws wouldn't take hold. On the second night, 'bout 11 o'clock, the b'ar showed up ag'in. He had bin thinkin of fresh port all the afternoon and had got hungry over it, and arter one look around he climbed upon the roof of the pen. It had a steep pitch to it, and it dropped off into a gully, and that b'ar had skassed got up before he was slidin down like a log of wood. He shot off the roof into the gully like a big ball, and me and the old woman laughed till the tears came. Three times the b'ar tried it, and three times he was dumped. I yelled at him and called him names, and his feelin's was hurt ag'in. He was so 'shamed 'bout things that he wouldn't even fight the dog.

"I knowed the varmint wouldn't gin up that way, but would keep comin back till he got sunthin. It struck me that he'd got fur the chickens next, and so I had a trap all ready fur him. He was too cute to step into it, and arter roamin around fur awhile he went off. I laughed at him and called him a mighty pore b'ar, and he appeared so lonesome over it that I almost pitied him. He didn't come back the next night or the next, but on the third night he showed up ag'in, and I had another joke ready fur him. I had headed the old dawg up in a stout bar'l and then wrapped the bar'l around with barbed wire. I used up 200 feet of wire around that bar'l, and the barbs stuck out like quills of a porcupine. As soon as the b'ar appeared the old dawg begun to bark and raise a fuss. I don't reckon that varmint had ever heard of a dawg in a bar'l befo', and I'm suah he hadn't never met with no barbed wire. He jest walked around to make sartin of things and then jumped in.

"Lemme tell yo' that thar was mo' fun in the jest ten minits than most

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b'ars and dawgs and looks set to be a y'ar. Bruin started in to bust that bar'l by buggin, but he soon gin it up. Then he rolled it 'bout, but every time he struck it he got a prick. Sometimes he'd chase it, and sometimes he'd run away from it, and he did hate to gin up beat. It wasn't no use in him fightin that bar'l, though, and he finally let it go and sorter cried over it. He went off with his head down and a homesick shamble, and the old woman turns to me and asks:

"Zeb, what'll that b'ar'skin be wuth when snow flies?"

"'Bout \$10," says I.

"Then yo' air \$10 out of pocket."

you give me the counting of the votes I can have you defeated by an overwhelming majority no matter if there isn't a single vote cast against you."

"Thank you kindly," said the president, "but there never has been an election in this republic, and I don't want to disturb people's minds by introducing any such useless and dangerous ceremony."

"Then why don't you resign?" said I.

"You've got a vice president, haven't you?"

"If you resign, he will come into office, and naturally he will be glad to have you go."

"You don't know what you are saying," replied the president. "Nobody ever heard of a president who resigned. If I were to do such a thing, I should be disgraced forever. People would say that I am either a coward or a lunatic. No, Don Smith! I haven't an enterprising enemy in all Zarguela, and I haven't one single friend that I can trust to rebel against me."

"I have been simply longing for a revolution ever since the sum in the treasury reached \$100,000, but this infernal nation is so well contented with my rule that nothing can induce it to rebel. When I think of the good times all the exiled presidents in Paris are having at this identical minute, it makes me wild to have to stay here, even though I do have the pleasure of playing poker with the American minister."

"Well, I felt downright sorry for Don Villar y Villar, for he was by long odds the best public man that I had met in any part of Central America. So I just said to him on the spur of the moment that if he would trust me I would undertake to get up a revolution against him in less than a fortnight."

"It wasn't till after he had jumped at my offer and called me his preserver and his dearest friend that it occurred to me that what I had really undertaken to do was to help him steal all the money in the treasury."

"Of course if I had been president of Zarguela I should have considered it stealing to run off with the treasury, especially as I could have collared the money honestly by issuing a regular shipshape decree that my salary should always be equal to the entire amount in the treasury. However, I had promised Don Villar y Villar to raise a revolution for him no matter what it might cost my conscience."

"Now I was acquainted with Captain Intimidad, who commanded the president's guard of honor and was responsible for the safety of the palace. This Captain Intimidad was a romantic sort of young chap, who believed that the president was the greatest and best man that ever lived. I felt pretty sure that if I went to work in the right way I could persuade Intimidad to head a revolution, and, as the result proved, I was right."

"I called on Captain Intimidad the next morning, and after a little preliminary conversation about the weather and bullfighting and constitutional law and such things I came to the point. I told him that Queen Victoria had asked the president to come to England to consult with her on an affair of tremendous importance, but

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that it was absolutely necessary and no one should know anything about the matter except that Don Villar y Villar had left Zarguela for parts unknown.

"Now," continued I, "according to your constitution the president cannot leave the country for a single day un-



"Do you really mean to say that you want to be turned out?"

less he is regularly and constitutionally turned out by a revolution. In these circumstances the president wants you to rebel and drive him out of the country next Monday night. He expects you to hold on to the presidency for, say, six months, when he will return and head a revolution that will put him back in office again."

"The young captain was at first knocked all in a heap by what I said to him, but little by little he got to understand that the president was really anxious for a revolution, and consequently Intimidad agreed to do what ever his beloved president might desire."

"I spent the rest of the day thinking out a plan of action and in making the necessary preparations for war. I had 50 rifles brought secretly to the palace and planted them at the second story windows, as if they were so many cannon, though I took good care that they should not be visible from the outside of the palace."

"Intimidad agreed to attack the front door of the palace with 30 men at precisely 1 o'clock in the morning. His men were to be provided with nothing but blank cartridges, and they were to fire away until the front door could be broken down, after which they were to rush into the palace and find that the president had fled."

"I had arranged that the president was to leave the palace soon after dusk on the night of the revolution, accompanied by a single trusty servant to carry the treasury, and I calculated that he would be well on his way to the coast before the revolution could break out."

"The thing that gave me the most trouble was to provide for the proper firing of the rifles in the second story windows of the palace. I couldn't fire them myself, for it would have been a breach of diplomatic etiquette for a foreign minister to take part openly in a revolution."

"I puzzled over this problem till my head ached, and finally I went to Captain Intimidad and told him the difficulty I was in. He solved it at once by telling me that he would send his particular friend, Lieutenant Partagas, to do the firing from the palace windows and assured me that Partagas was a man who could be implicitly trusted."

"There was one more thing to be settled. Intimidad insisted that two men must be killed in the attack and that their corpses must be left lying on the front steps of the palace, where every one could see them the morning after the revolution."

"He said that two men were always killed in a Central American revolution and that he doubted if a revolution in which nobody should be killed would be strictly constitutional. I saw that there was force in what he said, but I wasn't willing that any human lives should be sacrificed, and unfortunately there were no Chinamen in the country who could be passed off as soldiers slain in a glorious revolution. At last I had to leave the matter in his hands, the agreement being that none of his soldiers should be killed."

"Monday evening I said goodby to Don Villar y Villar and had a final interview with Intimidad. He told me that he had two corpses all ready and that he would put them on the steps of the palace before the beginning of the assault."

"When I insisted upon knowing how he had obtained his corpses, he exclaimed that there were two men in jail awaiting execution for murder and that the governor of the jail, being an intimate friend of his, had kindly shot the men and placed the corpses at his disposal."

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"Early the next morning I put on my uniform and started for the palace to congratulate the new president. When I entered the palace gates, I was astonished and horrified to discover about a dozen corpses lying on the grass and on the steps, and I saw at once that Partagas must have made a terrible mistake."

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